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# Protections for the United States

We have been incredibly fortunate that there has not been a major terrorist attack in the United States since Sept. 11, 2001. But yesterday's horrific news from London is a reminder that to make the nation safer, the Bush administration and Congress need to do more than raising the terror alert.

Several important steps should be taken right away. But influential industries and members of Congress have blocked these common-sense solutions, putting their narrow interests ahead of the national interest. They have been helped by a growing sense of complacency, fueled by the idea that the absence of attacks means the threat is gone. If the Madrid train attack last year did not change that thinking, yesterday's events certainly should. President Bush, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and leaders of Congress should take fast action on these fronts:

**Increased security for mass transit** The federal government has poured billions into airline security, while badly shortchanging railroads, buses and subways. Some lawmakers have unsuccessfully fought this financial imbalance. Now it is clear that aviation is not the only, and perhaps not even the primary, form of transportation threatened by terrorists. Congress should sharply increase the funds for rail, bus and subway security.

**A risk-based financing formula** Just as London was an obvious place for an attack, parts of the United States are particularly likely targets. The 9/11 commission recommended that antiterrorism funds be allocated solely based on risk, but some members of Congress have been trying to set aside much of the money for low-risk areas. That is irresponsible. Congress should base as much of this financing as possible - ideally, 100 percent - on risk.

**A tough chemical-plant security law** There are more than 100 plants where an attack would endanger the lives of a million or more people. Despite the enormity of the threat, Congress has refused to impose reasonable safety rules, largely because of pressure from the chemical industry. Senators Jon Corzine, Democrat of New Jersey, and Susan Collins, Republican of Maine, have been working hard on the issue. They should come up with a strong bill, and Congress should pass it without delay.

**A tough chemical transport law** Deadly chemicals are shipped by rail into major cities every day. A simple attack on a tanker car could kill as many as 100,000 people in 30 minutes. Often these shipments could be easily redirected, but shippers do not want the added expense. Senator Joseph Biden, Democrat of Delaware, has introduced a bill to keep shipments of hazardous chemicals out of the places terrorists

are likely to target. Congress should pass it at once.

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